

First record of the Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) for the dry tropical forest of northwestern Peru

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A Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) was sighted and photographed on November 8th, 2015 (Fig. 1) in Canoas de Punta Sal (3°55'26.22"S/80°52'55.06"W, 79 m), Contralmirante Villar Province, Tumbes department. The bird was seen at approximately 9:00 AM performing short flights and sallies at the sub-canopy of an Algarrobo (Carob) tree (*Prosopis pallida*). We lost sight of it but later we re-located it at 9:58 AM, close to the original locality. This time we used playback calls of Peruvian Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium peruanum*) and that allowed us to take photographs, make more detailed observations and identify the bird. The site is in northwestern Peruvian dry tropical forest (Linares-Palomino

2004), which includes tree species such as Algarrobo (*P. pallida*), Palo Santo (*Bursera graveolens*), Hualtaco (*Loxopterygium huasango*) among others.

The Great Crested Flycatcher belongs to the family Tyrannidae and has a wide distribution in the American continent (Fjeldså and Krabbe 1990, BirdLife International 2017). It generally forages alone in the canopy and sub-canopy of dense, as well as semi-open woodlands, and agricultural fields (Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990). It also occurs in semi-arid forests (Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990, Schulenberg *et al.* 2010) and is considered a very rare accidental boreal migrant in Peru (Schulenberg *et al.* 2010).



Figure N° 1: Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) found in Canoas de Punta Sal, Tumbes, on November 8th, 2015. Photo: Dennis Osorio.

Great Crested Flycatcher is a migratory bird from North America that normally arrives in Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador mostly October - April. It is considered a winter resident in Colombia, most frequently in the border and canopy of humid forest, second growth and secondary woodland (Ridgely & Tudor 1994, Hilty & Brown 2001, Lanyon 2010). In the eBird database (eBird 2017) there are several reports of the species in different sites in Ecuador, between October and December, which coincides with the time of our record:

- Michael Harvey, on December 3th, 2009, observed and recorded the vocalization of one individual in the Tiputini Biodiversity Station, Orellana (0°38'15.3"S / 76°08'57.6"W, 220 m), 640 km north east of our locality.
- Andreas Vasquez, Pomera Fronce, Anne Halley, Marilyn Christian & Julie Van Moorhem, on November 9th 2011 saw one individual on the Yalare Road, Esmeraldas (1°05'54.2"N / 78°50'26.2"W, 34 m), 600 km north east of our locality.
- Anne Sammis & Erick Grop, on October 4th 2014, saw one individual on the road from Gareno to Tena, Napo (1°01'16.8"S / 77°28'48.3"W, 360 m), 496 km north east of our locality.
- Jonas Nilsson, on November 3th 2016, photographed one individual in the Parque Bicentenario, Pichincha (0°08'42.2"S / 78°29'06.0"W, 2807 m), 495 km north east of our locality.

The Great Crested Flycatcher is slender and shows more saturated colors than other members of the genus *Myiarchus*. The back is greenish-gray, the throat and breast are gray, which contrasts with the yellow belly. Webbing on the primary feathers and on tail feathers is rufous. The tail looks completely rufous from below. The bill is black with the base of the lower mandible pale pink. It shows a well-developed bushy crest, which the bird often maintains raised. It leans

forward when perched and raises its crest as it moves its head up and down. Among the members of the genus *Myiarchus* found in Peru, the Brown-crested Flycatcher (*M. tyrannulus*) is the only one that shows rufous webbing on the primary feathers and tail feathers (Fig. 2).



Figure N° 2: Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*). Photo: Antonio García-Bravo.

This makes the Brown-crested Flycatcher the most likely species to be confused with Great Crested Flycatcher. However, Great Crested Flycatcher is larger, has a greenish-gray nape and mantle, and more saturated colors where the yellow belly is sharply separated from the gray breast and throat. Brown-crested Flycatcher has a grayish loreal area, which is not evident in Great Crested Flycatcher. The wing coverts pattern is also different between these two *Myiarchus* flycatchers. Based on these differences we ruled out the possibility of this bird being a Brown-crested Flycatcher. Additionally, Brown-crested Flycatcher does not normally occur in this area. We also considered in our analysis Dusky Capped Flycatcher (*M. tuberculifer*) and Sooty-crowned Flycatcher (*M. phaeocephalus*), both of which occur in northwestern Peru. However, these two *Myiarchus* have solid gray primary flight and tail feathers.

In Peru, there have been two previous records of the Great Crested Flycatcher: one individual was observed and tape recorded by Bret Whitney in 1980, at the Sucusari creek, an affluent of the nearby Napo River, north-west of Iquitos, Loreto Department (Fjeldså & Krabbe 1990, Schulenberg *et al.* 2010, Plenge 2017, Comité de Registros de Aves Peruanas 2016). A second individual was found by Renzo Zeppilli on October 25th 2007, at the Marvilla sector of the Pantanos de Villa marshes, on the outskirts of metropolitan Lima. Initially identified as Brown-crested Flycatcher by R. Zeppilli. Barry Walker and R. Zeppilli returned the following day and correctly identified it as Great Crested Flycatcher. The bird was calling a single drawn out “weeep”, not at all like the much shorter “chitt” of Brown-crested Flycatcher. This bird was photographed by Gunnar Engblom near the same locality on October 27th 2007 and the poor but conclusive photos are to be seen on the Birdingperu.com yahoo group’s site at this link http://www.birdingperu.com/masterperu/exp_birds.aspx?idbird=1415.

On November 15th 2015, our record and photographs were sent to the Comité de Registros de Aves Peruanas (CRAP). It was treated as the case 2015-007 and accepted as the first fully-documented record of the species for Peru. It was considered a vagrant (Comité de Registros de Aves Peruanas 2016).

We provide the appropriate documentation to elevate the Great Crested Flycatcher from the list of hypothetical species to the list of species occurring in Peru. This article also documents the presence of this species in the northwestern Peruvian dry tropical forest in addition to the two previous sightings in reeds, Eucalyptus and scrub near marshes (Pantanos de Villa) and the Amazon rainforest (Loreto).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Ricardo Sanchez Manrique Tavella, owner of Apart Hotel Las Cherelas, for allowing and facilitating the scouting and evaluation of Quebrada Canoas de Punta Sal. To Alfredo Begazo and Luis Cueto Aparicio for reviewing and contributing with information. To Gunnar Engblom for providing information about the record in Pantanos de Villa and to Alex Vásquez Pérez. Finally, to Barry Walker, Jose Tello and the editorial committee of the Boletín UNOP for comments to improve the manuscript.

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Artículo recibido: 09/03/2017

Artículo aceptado: 10/09/2017

Artículo publicado: 28/10/2017